

# CONNECTICUT COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

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[No. 2.

## INQUIRIES BY THE SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

The following inquiries will be appended to a circular of the Secretary of the Board, which it is his intention to address through the next No. of the Journal to school teachers and visitors, the clergy of all denominations, individuals in public stations, and all persons who desire to promote the more extensive usefulness of our common schools, inviting their attendance at a convention which he proposes to hold in the several counties of the state, as soon as he is enabled from further consultation to designate the most suitable time and place for each. Written answers to all or any of these inquiries, are respectfully requested, and in as particular a manner as the convenience of the writer will allow. If they cannot be brought, they may be forwarded to the convention, addressed to the Secretary. They are inserted here, in order to bring them earlier before such persons as are practically acquainted with the workings of our present school system, or who have bestowed any reflection upon these or kindred topics. They are not intended to exclude the consideration of other subjects. On the other hand, written or oral communication, on any other topic which may be deemed important by any friends of the cause, is earnestly solicited, so that from a comparison and interchange of views and opinions, proper remedies for defects, and efficient and acceptable plans for improvements in our system, may be proposed for the future action of the Legislature.

1. Does the present organization of your Board of school visitors secure a thorough examination of teachers, or an adequate supervision of the schools during each season of school?

2. Is there any system of classification adopted in your school society or district in order to put the younger children under a separate teacher or teachers?

3. Has your school society availed itself of the provisions of the law so far as "to institute a school of higher order for the common benefit of the society?" and if not, do you consider it practicable and advisable so to do?

4. Is there any voluntary association on the part of parents to visit the schools where their children are educated? and if not, could not such associations be organized for the future?

5. Is any inconvenience or discomfort suffered from the location and construction of school houses?

6. Are your schools furnished with apparatus for instruction—such as maps, globes, blackboards, &c.

7. Is any provision made for society or district libraries, for the use of teachers or scholars?

8. Are there any peculiar excellencies in the mode of government, or process of instruction in your schools, which it would be desirable to have generally introduced?

9. How many select schools are there in your school society? and what do you think has been their influence on the public schools?

10. What measures are taken to secure the punctual attendance of the children at school?

11. To what extent have you employed female teachers, and with what success?

12. Do you experience any inconvenience from the multiplication of districts?

13. In what manner has your Town appropriated the interest of the "Town deposite Fund"? If for the promotion of education in the common schools, on what principle is it distributed?

14. Is it desirable to increase the number of studies?

15. How many of your teachers follow teaching as a regular profession?

16. In what manner is moral instruction communicated in your school?

## CONSIDERATIONS CONNECTED WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT.

Many serious and interesting reflections naturally arise in our minds, when we take a pen and begin to write for the Journal now before us. How different the considerations which are suggested, from those which might naturally arise in another subject, on a different object were presented! How different, indeed if these were the same, and only the scene were changed!

Common Schools are in themselves a species of institutions of a most important character; and after the numerous illustrations of their usefulness which we have witnessed from our childhood, to find them now ranked by the most intelligent men of all enlightened countries among the chief blessings of a nation, is enough to make us dwell upon the name with peculiar emphasis. But when associated with New-England, common schools awaken peculiar feelings; and hence it is that we all wish success, and with enthusiasm, too, to the first step taken for the improvement of schools in this ancient dominion of education.

We have been so familiar with common schools all our lives, that we naturally underrate their value, and their effects. Who ever would learn the full worth of a plough, should go to Italy, or some other degraded land where it is unknown, and use such implements as he finds in the hands of the people. Let him observe, in the same wretched lands, the state to which hereditary ignorance has reduced them, and, if he pleases, attempt to educate his children there, and he will begin to realize what common schools are.

*Our Common Schools and the Prussian Schools.* The object of both was the security of political and religious liberty, which were and must be inseparable. Our ancestors advanced beyond the example of their European models, but they acted on their principles. Like later generations in the Protestant parts of Europe, we have relied too much on the energy of the institutions of our ancestors, and neglected their example in actively supporting them. In Prussia the schools had decayed like our own. The Prussians have revived the spirit of their fathers, and so may we.

## FEMALE TEACHERS OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

It is a question in which the friends of popular education must feel a deep interest, by what means well qualified teachers are to be furnished in any sufficient numbers, to meet the increasing demand for them which exists in all parts of our country. We may wake up the spirit of improvement in the department of common school instruction, and do *every thing else* that is needed to promote its prosperity, but if an adequate supply of good teachers is wanting, there will be a proportionate failure in the efforts that are made. A defective system of popular education, with many imperfections and inconveniences in its practical movements, may nevertheless do an incalculable amount of good, wherever it is carried into effect by competent and skilful teachers. While, on the other hand, the best system and the most ample provision of all the other necessary means for conducting its operations, will accomplish but little if it is not carried on by those who are thoroughly qualified for their work.

In these remarks, the writer would be far from discouraging the noble exertions which are making in our own and other states, to promote the cause of popular education. May they go forward with increasing strength, and reach every part of this great field of enterprise, on the success of which the destinies of our country, under God, depend. But while the other parts of the enterprise are carried on with vigor, it ought ever to be remembered that nothing will tend so much and so rapidly

to consummate it, as to furnish a larger supply of first rate instructors for our common schools. Every such instructor is one efficient agent gained to the cause of improvement in the department of popular education. Let them be prepared and sent forth to occupy their appropriate stations, and they will enter at once upon the practical parts of the great work, and show by example, as well as theory, what a good system of common school instruction ought to be. They will be the very persons, too, to appreciate what alterations and improvements are desirable in our present systems, while their character and influence will afford a powerful aid in carrying them into effect. One first rate teacher of intelligence and practical wisdom, at an important post of usefulness, is, to say the least, doing as much to help forward the cause of popular education, as some three or four eloquent speeches at public meetings for this purpose. Not that we can do without the speeches. Both are good in their place. But while the speeches make the most noise, and accomplish much in inciting to action, it is the opinion of the writer that the teacher, such as he has described, holds quite as high, if not a higher rank in the scale of productive effort.

How shall we get good teachers for our district schools, and enough of them? While we should encourage our young men to enter upon this patriotic, and I had almost said, missionary field of duty, and present much higher inducements to engage them to do so, I believe every one must admit, that there is but little hope of attaining *the full supply*, or any thing like it, from that sex. This will always be difficult, so long as there are so many other avenues open in our country to the accumulation of property, and the attaining of distinction. We must, I am persuaded, look more to the other sex for aid in this emergency, and do all in our power to bring forward young women of the necessary qualifications to be engaged in the business of common school instruction. The writer hopes to be able to furnish some further thoughts on this interesting topic in the subsequent numbers of the Journal. T. H. G.

#### NEWSPAPERS.

One of the first evidences of improvements in education in ~~most~~ states which have begun to do something on this subject in earnest, has been shown by the newspapers. Editors ought to be able to appreciate its value, if any class of citizens can; and the diffusion of useful knowledge, and the support of morals and religious principle being the legitimate objects of their profession, surely they may be confidently relied on for cooperation and support.

We would invite the editors of Connecticut papers, therefore, to yield us that aid which they easily may, by noticing our enterprise, copying such of our columns as they may approve of, and discussing any points of importance in which our opinions may differ. We will endeavour to do justice to the noble subject to which our pages are devoted, at least in courtesy of style, if we have not all the ability we might desire.

No reflecting man can doubt, that we may easily obtain a considerable amount of information concerning education at home and abroad, which will be more acceptable to the intelligent people of Connecticut, than a large part of the matter poured out from day to day by the presses of our commercial capitals. Many of the papers in the United States are prepared for classes of readers very different from our own. It certainly may be presumed, that whatever papers are adapted to the elevated intelligence, morality and taste of Connecticut, will be liberally supported by the people.

#### THE CARE OF EDUCATION IS THE PEOPLES OWN WORK.

It is highly important that the inhabitants of all our states should strongly feel this great truth. Until they feel it, nothing effectual can possibly be done to diffuse that instruction which is so greatly needed.

Let us imagine for a moment that well devised laws had been passed by all the legislatures; but that the people remained indifferent and inactive. Such laws could not be well executed, and must remain without effect in the statute books. Even if districts were organized, school houses constructed and furnished with books, the laws could not compel teachers to

present themselves, inspectors to examine them, nor even parents to send their children.

But suppose the children attended, and the officers were all regularly present at the meetings appointed: what power could compel them to take the pains necessary to become good examiners of applicant teachers, or good school inspectors? Without a serious and hearty devotion to their tasks, the business can never be well done.

A school is not a piece of machinery, which can go alone; nor is a teacher a person who lives in a state of independence of the feelings and opinions of society. It will be well if a community, by powerful and combined exertions, succeed in obtaining a good school, and in maintaining it in a high rank. They need not think of complaining that it requires exertion and self-denial on their part: let them rather rejoice that the little exertion and self denial which they have exerted, have yielded them so rich a reward. A truly good school is a great benefit, an inestimable blessing. Every member of every community where one is found, derives some advantage from it. It is a source of varied good; and its happy influences reach in every direction. Let those, then, who are to be benefitted by good schools, take up in earnest the improvement of their own.

The virtuous habits and intelligence of a people make land valuable more than its natural strength of soil. Where there is an industrious, moral and educated population, there is a demand for the fruits of the earth, a supply of hands to produce them, and the laws made to protect property are powerful, because they are regarded. A good school may do more than some persons may suppose, to increase the value of land, and of other kinds of property also. The schools of Connecticut, which have had so great an influence in promoting intelligence and steady habits among the people, have doubtless increased the value of real estate within its limits many millions.

We would by no means wish to degrade education, by measuring its worth only by a standard of pecuniary profit: but, in enumerating its advantages, we ought not to overlook, or underrate its natural tendency to increase the supply of human conveniences and comforts, and to secure us in the enjoyment of them.

If the improvement of our schools were seen to be as necessary to us as the improvement of our neglected roads, all would combine, and the work would be done.

#### LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS.

Common Schools have received a great and salutary influence in some places, through the influence of lyceums, and literary associations of kindred character.

In Worcester, Massachusetts, a few years since, a lyceum was formed, comprising a few intelligent men, who were active friends of the young, and formed a committee appointed to visit the district schools, and devise means for their improvement. They proceeded to their task, with great zeal and equal judgment. They first made a call at each school, and by their kind manners, and conciliatory conversation, made the teachers feel that they had at least a few sincere and disinterested friends. They soon after proposed occasional meetings for the teachers, which produced excellent and speedy results. At one of the earliest of them, a sketch was given of the plan on which a good school was conducted in some other place; and a resolution was passed, to devote the next meetings to hearing reports from teachers, of the plans adopted by themselves.

The following meetings were interesting; and the reports proved, that the schools in all the districts were speedily improved, and many of them remodelled, in conformity with the hints thrown out as above mentioned.

Who cannot see wisdom in devising measures like these? Information of improved methods was furnished, all were predisposed to make experiments with them, in consequence of the amicable manner in which they had been approached, and a motive was offered to induce the teachers to make useful changes without delay: for they were all to report the actual condition of their schools, and must report old plans or new ones. The case was urgent, and indolence and procrastination were overcome.

But various other changes were made, which gave the schools of Worcester an eminence which they retain, it is believed, to the present time. Through the influence of the Lyceum, or some of its members, and the obvious improvement of the

schools, persons of wealth were persuaded to become the liberal patrons of education, and soon learned that they benefitted their own estates and prospects by money so well laid out.

But, without extending remarks on this subject, beyond the limits of our columns, we would earnestly recommend to lyceums, (of which there are many in the state,) to see to the schools: to appoint committees to attend to them, to invite teachers to join them, and to admit deserving youth to their lectures and libraries.

#### YOUNG TEACHERS

Of the most promising character are all marked by one trait: they eagerly seek for instruction in their profession. The task of teaching is one that requires not only a passable acquaintance with the branches of knowledge which are to be taught; but a thorough and a ready familiarity with them.

This is not all. A teacher must know another branch, viz. that of instruction. He should well know how to convey his knowledge to his pupils. Every body does not see the difference between learning and teaching; and it is an unfortunate thing, that so many people suppose an instructor needs nothing to fit him well for his office, but to be able to read, write, cipher, and bear an examination in grammar, geography, &c.

When a sensible young man begins to keep a school, he begins to feel that he has undertaken a business with which he is not acquainted. If a young teacher does not feel this, it must be owing to his ignorance or self-conceit. He is incompetent, and he must see his incompetency if he be not blind.

Now young teachers may be aided in their business in four ways: 1st, by publications devoted to education: 2d, by occasional instruction given by persons of experience; 3d, By practical experiments under the direction of well qualified directors; 4th, By Teachers' Seminaries.

There are several publications which may be recommended for the use of our teachers: The Annals of Education, published in Boston, a monthly magazine, price \$2 per year; 2d. The American Common School Assistant, published in New-York monthly, price 50 cents; and, 3d, the papers printed by the Boards and Superintendents of Education in Ohio, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. It is of great importance that every instructor should read some publication of this kind: for they all contain information which he needs, and is not likely to obtain from any other source. The reading of a single page, or even a single line, has probably given many teacher some important knowledge, such as he could use with advantage in his school, and which he might never have obtained if left to himself. It ought therefore to be regarded as one of the first objects, to have one or more publications devoted to education regularly received in every school district, and read at least by the teachers.

Beside journals of Education, a number of books may be warmly recommended for the use of instructors, which we have not room to describe, nor even to name at present. We would here remark, however, that a few dollars given by any friends of education, to purchase some of the best works, for use in his district, would do great good.

In the next number of this journal, the reader may expect to find some remarks on the advantages and means of procuring occasional instruction for teachers, from friends of education.

#### HINTS CONCERNING SMALL CHILDREN.

Some of the greatest difficulties which many teachers have to meet, arise from the youngest children. It is often pleasant to see their eagerness to go to school with their brothers and sisters; and their smiles sometimes add cheerfulness to the place, without interrupting business: but more frequently they cause disturbance, and baffle the teacher in all his efforts to keep the others attentive and orderly.

Many teachers suffer small children to attend their schools, out of respect to their parents, or for some other reason, while they feel that they get little good and do much harm. Intelligent persons know, too, that the trouble they give is not generally intentional, but arises out of some natural cause: such as inconvenient seats, want of change, of exercise or of appropriate occupation.

Now most district schools are so ill provided for the comfort of young children, and most of them are conducted on a system

so ill calculated to keep them interested, that probably many teachers of such schools may think the difficulties above spoken of can never be obviated. When it is possible, the small children may be placed in a separate room, with great advantage, under the care of a female: but in many districts this is not easily done.

It happens, however, that some schools in different places have been so improved, both in arrangements and methods of teaching, that these evils have been almost entirely removed. We will give a brief account of one such school, hoping that some teachers will try experiments for their own benefit and that of their pupils.

A few months ago the teacher of a district school, in a country village, complained that the little children, (many of whom were sent to his school to be kept out of the way,) greatly interrupted his discipline and instructions. To the eye of a visitor they indeed presented a painful spectacle, being left almost entirely to themselves, with nothing to do which they could understand, and seated on benches so high, that they feared a fall, and not unfrequently got one. The weakest were often crowded, or otherwise oppressed and irritated, by the strongest; and their complaints and cries, sometimes mixed with laughter, confused the master, diverted the attention of the other children, and displeased the spectator.

A few weeks afterwards, at another call, the visitor found three or four low benches placed in one corner of the room, and all the small children seated on them, some with slates and pencils. They were attentive, cheerful and silent. Their little feet rested on the floor, they could lean back when weary, and every fifteen or twenty minutes the teacher, or one of his most trustworthy and capable elder pupils, gave words of command, or some signal, and they rose, clapped their hands, faced to the right and left, and made various motions in imitation of him. Then they would sing some little hymn or song they had learnt; and afterwards repeat the addition or multiplication table all together, or hear a story read about the cow, lion, eagle, or some other object, while a picture of it was held up before them.

The teacher said that he had derived indescribable relief from this change in his school; and that, after the few first days, the other scholars were not disturbed by the exercises.

#### FRENCH JOURNALS OF EDUCATION.

There are three periodical publications in Paris, which contain much information worthy of being known in the United States.

1st. The General Journal of Public Instruction and of the Scientific and Literary Courses. It contains eight large pages, and appears twice a week, under the direction of the Minister of Public Instruction, Mr. Salvandy; and gives information of the progress of all the branches of education under his charge, which are more extensive and comprehensive than is generally supposed.

2d. The General Manual of Primary Instruction, a monthly pamphlet of about fifty pages, under the same high official direction, devoted to the lower classes of schools.

These two publications have done much for the improvement of education, being extensively circulated, especially among teachers, inspectors, committees, &c. They give the laws and official acts relating to education, accounts of public examinations of schools, teachers' seminaries, (called Normal Schools,) approved methods of instruction, notices of books for libraries and schools, anecdotes of faithful teachers, with sketches of education in foreign countries.

The "Scientific and Literary Courses" alluded to, are conducted by the Academies of Science, Literature, &c., but belong to the great system of *Public Education*, which was founded a few years ago in France, with a general resemblance to that previously adopted in the state of New-York. The great points which are kept in view are, to render education as common and as thorough as possible. The general plan is a noble one, and is carried on with a zeal and activity truly laudable. The minister of public instruction has ever at his command the services or counsel of many of the scientific and literary men of Paris, with many other facilities offered by the artists, the libraries, &c., the dignity of his office, and the money at his disposal.

But there are obstacles in his way from which we in America are free; and while we admire the better features of European education, we may derive new encouragement in our labors at home, as well by appreciating our own superior advantages, as by contemplating the zeal, and perhaps by adopting some of the methods displayed in other countries. With all the advantages above enumerated, then, there are great opposing influences in the way of common education in France. Some of these are more extensive and powerful than would be easily believed.

First, there is a state of hereditary ignorance pervading a great part of the nation, from which it is extremely difficult to arouse them; and there is a great scarcity of materials among the people of which to form teachers, as well as school officers, even while many of the latter are paid for their services. The late minister of instruction, Mr. Guizot, believed that he accomplished as much as was possible with the present generation, although he found room to deplore the small progress he was able to make in the improvements he attempted. In the next place, the religious opinions of the government, and the majority of the nation, are not reconcilable with a thorough plan of improvement. Their principles and prejudices are at war with the true foundation of such a system. The awful experience of France during the Revolution, has convinced the government that infidelity is its deadly foe; and in compliance with the recommendation of Guizot and others, the king laid the foundation of the system of common education on religious instruction. Books of Bible extracts have therefore been introduced into the schools: but this is opposed to the principles taught by Rome. Infant schools, called in France "Salles d'Asyle," (Halls of Asylum,) are exceedingly popular in Paris and other parts of the kingdom: but, only about six months since, the Pope denounced them, as institutions dangerous to the Roman Catholic religion. The "Journal General de l'Education," remarked on this, that His Holiness must have been misinformed, choosing thus to deny his infallibility rather to disown Infant schools. Yet the same journal, in a late number, has been in some way compelled to admit a review of a learned history of the Papacy, by a German Protestant, and to defend the very doctrines which so often oppose the improvement of the schools.

*Note. If we turn from this view of things in France, to consider for a moment our happy freedom in this state, from such formidable difficulties as there exist, how encouraging is the sight! Here is a population trained in common schools, with all their feelings and opinions warmly in favor of education—universal education—education founded on the Bible. We are a people who regard the love of intelligence, virtue and freedom as the chief honor of our ancestors, and would be ashamed to think ourselves incompetent to hand them down to our children.*

But we hasten to notice, though very briefly, the last of the three French publications alluded to above. The Friend of Infancy, an Infant School Journal, (L'Ami de l'Enfance, Journal des Salles d'Asyle.) It is a pamphlet of about 50 pages, published once in two months, by the Infant School Committee, under the sanction of the Minister of Public Instruction. The contents of it are very interesting, as they comprise official acts, reports, methods of instruction, and accounts from Infant Schools in different parts of the continent of Europe, where they have recently been much extended: chiefly in France, Switzerland, Italy and Prussia.

In December last, a long report on the Infant Schools of Paris, was presented to the Central Committee of Public Instruction, by Madame Millet, Special Inspectress of those institutions in the Department of the Seine, from which we learn, that the system was introduced from England in 1827, when she was sent to London by a Committee of Parisian Ladies, to acquaint herself with the schools of that metropolis. Schools of the same class, but on a plan somewhat modified, soon multiplied in Paris. They now amount to twenty-three, and have lately been placed under the supervision and direction of the Minister of Public Instruction. The report of the Inspectress is circumstantial in respect to all these schools, and highly interesting.

Our readers may expect to find in our future numbers occasional extracts from these and some other foreign journals, on subjects important alike on both sides of the Atlantic.

#### SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND VISITERS.

There are few ways in which a person of almost any profession or situation in life whatever, can do more good with so small an expense of time and labor, as by performing the duty of visiting the district schools around him. Every call at the school house, made by a person who feels an interest in the children and their teacher, is sure to excite an interest among them all.

Schools are generally so much neglected by parents, and even by the professed advocates of education, that both teachers and children are tempted to regard them as of very little value. Every department of business receives attention; conversation daily turns on various matters, many of which are of trifling import: but the school and its interests are almost universally treated with neglect. Children indeed may be assured, over and over again, that it is of great importance to them to attend school, and to be punctual, studious and obedient; but they may sometimes suspect that their elders regard it rather as a convenient prison in which they may be kept out of their way. The teacher, too, unless strongly fortified with a clear and manly conception of the real dignity and importance of his daily task, (as many teachers happily are,) will be liable to the danger of considering it, as the public too often do, merely as a thankless, and ill rewarded branch of business, tolerable only to those who have no easier way of gaining a livelihood.

When a visitor enters the school house, actuated by a regard for the place and its inmates, his presence diffuses a higher and more agreeable spirit. He shows that he values the character of the instructor, and approves of the daily labors of the pupils. He is received with smiles, he leaves satisfaction and encouragement behind him.

#### QUESTIONS

*For the examination of a teacher by a School Committee. Such questions have been used with success, and are worthy of general consideration.*

(After enquiries about his residence, education, experience in instruction, intentions for the future, whether to continue in the profession or not, and a careful examination of his certificate of moral character, some record of his replies may be made. The teacher may then be requested to write an application to the Committee for employment in their school. This will afford a good test of his hand-writing, posture, orthography, syntax, command of language, and acquaintance with received forms. He then may be asked how he would frame a quarter bill, or a weekly report to a parent, of the behavior of his child. A few of his words may be given him to parse and define.)

Education is properly divided into three kinds:—intellectual, moral, and physical. A teacher should practice them all every day and hour. What belongs to each of these kinds? (Would you call arithmetic a part of moral education? If a teacher furnishes his pupils with comfortable seats, good air, and timely exercise, what kind of education does he attend to?)

Why is it important for a teacher to know something of the human frame, and the way of preserving health? What do you know of the bones or muscles, or any other part of the body, which would lead you to be careful about the seats or desks—about opening or shutting windows, changing the postures of children, &c.?

Is it important whether children are made to learn by one motive or any other? For what reason? Is fear the best motive? Why? Is emulation, or a spirit of rivalry, the best motive? Why? Is the approbation of the teacher, or friends, the best? Why? Is the hope of getting money, or honor, the best? Is the wish to please God, and to learn of Him, and to be like Him, the best? Why? Do you think a school may be successfully governed and taught, by one who depends chiefly on this motive, duty to God? Mention, if you can, some of the ways in which children may be taught to feel that God requires them to obey their teachers, to treat their companions kindly, and to be studious and conscientious.

Do you think the mind can be well taught any branch, merely by learning to repeat words from memory? How do you begin to teach reading? Why do you prefer that method? What do you think of the practice of teaching the letters first, and

the whole spelling book next, before the child is allowed to read or write at all? Do you think writing on slates, or otherwise, may assist in learning letters, spelling or reading? Why? May definitions be advantageously taught before a child can read? When and how?

At what age may a child be allowed to begin to learn writing? In what manner? Would you use slates? The blackboard? Why? How do you teach a child to sit while writing? How to hold a pencil or pen? How long should a writing lesson continue? How often should the lessons be repeated? Should drawing lines or pictures be practised, to aid in teaching to write, or for any other purpose? Write a specimen of such large hands as you would wish your pupils to write. Then small hands. Would you connect writing with spelling? Defining? Arithmetic? Reading? Geography? How?

At about what age would you have the study of arithmetic begun? In what manner? Would you depend entirely on books in teaching any part of arithmetic? Why? By what means may arithmetic be made familiar and useful in the daily concerns of life? How would you teach the ready use of weights, measures and money?

When and how would you begin to teach grammar? How would you make it practically useful?

#### IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

Much attention has been attracted to the progress made in common schools in the state of New York. Both in America and in Europe, the annual reports made by the superintendent to the legislature, have excited much interest; and that for good reasons. By the adoption of a particular system, founded on an active, practical principle, that state succeeded, in a few years, in inducing her inhabitants to organize districts, erect school houses, provide teachers, assemble almost all the children, and make regular returns on the various important points required by law, so that official reports were readily made, every session of the legislature, of the state of the schools, and with a facility that excited general surprise, as well as gratification.

It probably appears to many, a matter of wonder how all this can have been done, and is still doing, in a state until lately so differently situated from our own and Massachusetts. While New Jersey and Pennsylvania, though lying adjacent, have remained in their hereditary indifference to common schools, how has it come to pass that they are found in such a state of prosperity in New York?

The legislature had the happiness, (it may have been the foresight also,) to adopt a principle in making school laws, which has great vigor in it, and which, it is to be presumed, under appropriate application, may hereafter be made to produce still greater effects in other states. They offered a small sum out of the interest of their school fund, to each district which should comply with certain terms; and those terms were such as were judiciously suited to the condition of the state. School officers were to be appointed in each district, a school room provided, a teacher employed who had been furnished with a certificate by the inspectors within twelve months, a census of the children taken, &c., all was this to be reported through the regular channels, to the superintendent before a specified day, on penalty of losing all claim to the school money of the state.

A little reflection will convince the reader, that this pecuniary motive might operate with effect, at least, in some cases. For if the people of a district desired to obtain their share of the money, and failed through the negligence of an inspector, a commissioner or the teacher, censure would fall where it was due; and the next year the ground of complaint would naturally be avoided. Or if a portion of the inhabitants were willing to raise the money required of the district, and another opposed to it, when the time arrived for the annual distribution of the income of the fund, the latter party would be very likely to be charged with the public loss. Now experience has proved in New York, that this principle is extensively useful when so applied; and, although it may at first strike us as mercenary, and in some sense unworthy to be employed to favor the noble object of common education, it loses its ob-

jectionable aspect when carefully examined. It has a direct tendency to enlist men of influence in the details of school operations, and in a manner compels even those who chiefly seek popularity, to appear as the advocates of education.

The pecuniary interest appealed to, is that of the public: to desire which, and to labor for it, is generous and laudable in an individual, provided it interferes with no right. And this interest is placed by the law in a secondary rank, as subservient to the schools. Whoever has anything to do under the law, must feel that education is its great end, and the importance of education must be raised in his esteem.

Thus the principle on which the law of the state of New York was founded, not only seems an active one, but experience has proved it to be so. It has not accomplished all which some have hoped, nor which many may now suppose: but it has brought about a great and salutary change in a very few years, and in the only proper and useful manner, viz., by the voluntary agency of the people. The small amount annually distributed among the districts, has induced them to spend many times more, besides enlisting thousands of respectable men in more or less systematic labor every year in behalf of the schools. The results have been overrated by some writers both at home and abroad, and that is unfortunate. Intelligent friends of education in the state are sensible of the imperfections of the system, and the various abuses which have prevailed in different places; yet its excellence is great, and its advantages are seen in the wonderful, and perhaps unprecedented change which it has produced.

But, as was hinted above, the New York law should be nowhere exactly copied, unless in a state where education is in the condition in which it was there a few years ago. The same principle may probably be used elsewhere with success; but it must be applied under modifications wisely adapted to the state of things to be improved. The law already requires alteration in that state. Indeed, the superintendent of Common Schools of New York, several years since, began to recommend that new and higher conditions should be imposed on the districts. This is evidently desirable; for now that the first terms required have been generally complied with, no farther progress is made in improving education. Things remain stagnant, because no inducement is offered to proceed. The motive has lost its moving power, because it has reached the end of its range. If every district in New York were now required to prove that the school house, if new, has been built in a good spot, and according to a given plan,—or if old, has been prepared for ventilation, furnished with approved desks and benches, supplied with books, slates, black boards, maps, a library, globes, and other necessary apparatus,—if these or other improvements were required, and more occasionally added to the list, there is reason to presume that the progress of the state would be progressive. The reason we have to question whether the legislature of that state were really acquainted with the nature of the principle alluded to, when they introduced it into their system, arises from the fact that they show little disposition to make a new application of it, and so little intelligence by delaying to adapt it to present circumstances and wants.

#### VIEWS OF FELLENBERG CONCERNING THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.

The following is an extract from "Travels on the Continent of Europe," by President Fisk:

"Mr. Fellenberg expressed his very great surprise at the neglect of religious instruction in our schools in America; that the Bible was excluded as a regular text book; in short, that in the United States, among a religious, a protestant, an enlightened, a free people, man should be educated so much in view of his physical wants, and his temporal existence, while the moral feelings of the heart, and our religious relations to God and eternity, should be left so much out of our schools.

But, he said, the great principles of our religion would come into collision with no man's views who believed in Christianity; and that, at any rate, party views were nothing in comparison with the importance of religious training; and therefore every good man ought to be willing to make some sacrifice of party views for the great benefits of an early religious education. How true are these sentiments! How worthy of

the philanthropist of Hofwyl! When will the citizens of the United States feel their force?"

It will gratify many of our readers, we have no doubt, to hear so decided an expression in favor of that great fundamental feature in the school system of our ancestors, viz., the use of the Scriptures in schools, from the excellent Mr. Fellenberg, the founder of the noble institution of Hofwyl, in Switzerland. It is gratifying, also, to hear it approved by our much respected countryman, President Fisk. We are happy to say, however, that the Bible is becoming used more and more every year in our schools, and that although too extensively neglected, it is probably less so than Mr. Fellenberg supposed.

#### SCHOOL HOUSES.

Most of the school houses in this state may be considerably improved without much expense, and indeed with none at all. There are two reasons why many improvements are not made which would prove both cheap and important. The first is, little care has been taken to point out their defects to those who would have been likely to remove them; and the second is, that bad habits are apt to blind the eyes, so that we overlook evils to which we are accustomed.

Desks and benches should be so formed, as to make the children who use them as comfortable as possible. By sawing off a few legs, till the children can sit and place their feet on the floor, and lay their arms on the desks while writing, without raising their elbows, much comfort and good writing may be secured.

The teacher should never forget, that he himself requires such arrangements as these for his own comfort, and would think it a hardship if denied them for a single day. He should remember also, that he never sits upright an hour or two, without wishing to lean his back against something. Yet he is far more able to sit without leaning, than children are. The muscles which hold their bodies erect, are much weaker, and sooner wearied.

He probably has a back to his seat, and often uses it; let him make similar provision for his pupils. He will find them much more studious, and more easily governed, by every such attention to their natural weakness and wants. Some benches may be moved to the back of a desk, and those who sit on it, permitted to lean. When that cannot be done, the children may be made to change their places for a time, during recitation, for instance.

Standing affords no relief to the back, though some may suppose it does. The whole trunk, head and arms must still be held in an upright position by the power of the muscles below the short ribs. Observe a child who needs rest for those muscles while standing, and nature will declare it. He throws the weight of his frame on one foot; that affords relief to the muscles on the other side; then he changes, to rest the other muscles in their turn. He needs a temporary resting place for his back; and even a few minutes will commonly suffice.

It would be well if the teacher would sometimes sit as long without leaning, as his children do, and lean only while they lean. Many teachers have not thought particularly on this subject, and therefore give it so little attention.

One improvement which most school houses require, is such a change in the window casing, that the upper sashes, (or at least some on both sides of the room,) may be lowered at pleasure. In many instances this may be provided for with great facility. It is, however, not sufficient without daily attention on the part of the teacher, as many school houses bear witness. Some of the best school rooms in Boston, (and in other places too,) are rarely well ventilated, although the windows are fitted for it, because the lowering of the upper sashes is neglected.

Windows should be so made and used, on more accounts than one. When the lower sash is raised, the wind blows in horizontally upon the papers, and often gives the children colds. But the most important advantage afforded by lowering the upper sashes, is this: that it lets out the impure air, while it lets in the pure. Many persons do not clearly understand how this change is effected: even some who have heard it explained do not appear fully to apprehend it. Let us say what has often been said before on this point, with the hope that teachers and school visitors will pay strict attention to the ventilation of our school rooms hereafter.

Warm air rises. Breathing air warms it, and so does the heat from our bodies. The air around us, therefore, and still more that coming out from our lungs, is continually rising. When we are in a tight room, it rises to the ceiling, and there remains, at least until it becomes cool, and warmer air goes up to take its place.

Let it be borne in mind here, that air once breathed is not well fitted to be breathed again, and never will be, until it has got among the leaves of living plants, and remained there some time. This is owing to certain changes which we have not now time enough to explain, but which the science of chemistry makes known in a most interesting manner.

Now the air which comes from the lungs of a school full of children, rises towards the ceiling, and in a short time a large quantity of warm, breathed air will be collected in the upper part of the room, while that in the lower part may be pure. But in an hour or two, or half an hour, according to the size of the room and number of scholars, the impure air will fill the whole room, and the children must begin to breathe it over again. Even if the lower sashes of the window are kept open, the evil is only partly remedied. It is impossible to change all the air by that means: for that which is above the level of the openings is left without any means of escape, or can be driven out only very gradually, by a slow intermixture with the fresh air, which produces some commotion by its entrance.

The air in the upper part of a room will not come down and go out of a window as soon as it is opened, though some teachers, as well as other people, seem to think so. But make an opening any where in the upper part of the room, and the upper air will pass out as soon as air from without can enter to supply its place.

Any person who may wish to understand these operations, may try experiments when the room has been filled with dust or smoke. Let him try one day to get rid of the annoyance by opening the windows only from below, and the next day by lowering the upper sashes on both sides of the room, or the upper on one side, and the lower on the other. He will then be able to perceive the advantage of the practice here recommended in daily ventilation.

The late report on school houses, made by Horace Mann, Esq., superintendent of common schools in Massachusetts, forcibly urges this practice, and many others connected with the improvement of school rooms and buildings.

#### INFANT SCHOOLS.

Among the improvements made, within a few years, in different departments of education, is to be ranked the whole system of Infant schools. In this country, it is true, infant schools have been opened and conducted for a time in some towns, where they have afterwards been closed and abandoned; and not a few of their early friends are now, in some degree, indifferent, and indeed opposed to them.

In some of our principal cities, however, infant schools still exist, and have their warm friends, whose esteem for the system appears to increase, rather than to decline, from year to year. Those friends, it is believed, generally regard many of the experiments heretofore made in different parts of the Union, as unfair; and certainly almost all the teachers opened their schools with very little previous experience; while most of the managers and directors were no better prepared for their duties.

It is a fact which seems to claim attention, that where Infant schools have been most known, they have received the most approbation; and that both teachers and managers, who have been most active in their direction, and best acquainted with the details of their results, have become their most decided advocates. It is believed that these remarks would be found true, if careful inquiries were made in New-York and Philadelphia, especially, and in Paris, and several other principal cities of Europe. Another fact is important to be considered, viz. that where infant schools have existed, they have produced important improvements in other schools. Even in some places where they have been given up, and where prejudices exist against them, surrounding schools are better, in some respects, than they were before. The reason of this may be easily pointed out.

Infant schools, though they are very different from such other in a variety of respects, generally agree in a few material particulars. Low seats with backs are provided, expressly for

the comfort and convenience of small children; healthful and pleasing exercises of the limbs and body are practised; the singing of hymns and moral songs is a frequent occupation; the study of natural history is pursued to some extent, either by means of sensible objects, such as stones, wood, leaves, fruits, shells, &c., or with pictures of them, or at least with books which give intelligible accounts of animals, plants, minerals, &c. with questions adapted to recitations. Writing, and often drawing, on sand or slates, is generally practised; the manner of teaching is more varied, enlivening and parental than in some other schools; and the discipline is commonly more mild; while religious and moral instructions are more frequent and familiar.

Probably no teacher ever entered an Infant school for the first time, without receiving hints of importance on some point of instruction or discipline. Certain it is that many, and those of much experience too, have found something to approve and to imitate. Hence it has come to pass, that the influence of such schools has sometimes remained with others after they have ceased to exist.

#### MUSIC TAUGHT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF PARIS, AND TO WORKMEN.

[Translated for the Connecticut Common School Journal.]

On the 6th of May, the general meeting called the Orpheon was held in the Hotel de Ville. It consisted of the young pupils of the free schools, who had been formed into singing classes by M. B. Wilhem, general inspecting director of vocal music of the primary schools of the city of Paris.

Those pupils from the male adult schools who had been taught in music classes, were joined with the children, for the tenor and bass, so that voices of very different ages and characters rendered the orchestra the more complete.

The choir, in number above 400, performed in admirable time and harmony, several select pieces, without any instrumental accompaniment, which were received with general applause: "The Invocation, by Sacchini; "the Romanesca," a piece of the 16th century; "the Spectacle of Nature," by Tschärner; a vocal symphony, by Chelard; "the Little Boarders," &c. The exhibition was concluded by two of the chef d'œuvre of Michel and Philidor, &c. Several of the pieces were repeated by request. The Hall of St. John was filled; and among the spectators were the Prefect of La Seine and his family, several mayors of the arrondissements and their assistants, M. Orfila, member of the Council of Public Instruction, and several other members of the University, the celebrated composer Berton, and some of the members of the Academy.

The success of this meeting promises much for the well organized introduction of vocal instruction; and reflected the highest honor on the respected officer who has the direction of that branch.

The introduction of vocal music into the education of the people, is a more important point than we might at first be inclined to believe. Besides the development which it gives to a precious organ, and the relaxation it affords to the laborer after his work, the display it makes of talents which would otherwise have remained unknown, or might never have existed, and its creating new branches of business for the industrious, music supplies a pure and noble species of pleasure, in place of amusements too often gross, ruinous and even criminal. It tends to soften and purify the manners, and is in fact a great step towards the moral improvement and melioration of the lower classes, which, in our age, ought to be the object of all the friends of the human race. We may add, that by means of it, will gradually be effected the musical education of France, which country, to the present time, has remained so inferior in this respect to Germany and Italy, and which may perhaps soon have as little reason to envy its neighbors on this point as on any other.

Gratuitous and popular instruction in vocal music in Paris, was commenced in September, 1819, by the first use of M. Wilhem's method, in the communal school of the street of St. Jean de Beauvais. This method, which was adopted in March, 1820, after a report by Messrs. De Gerando, de Lastovrie, Franeur and Jomard, was successively introduced into the two schools of the society of elementary instruction, and the nine schools of the city of Paris.

In the month of May, 1835, on the proposition of the Count de Rambuteau, Prefect of la Seine, President of the Central Committee of Primary Instruction, the municipal council having unanimously voted for instruction in singing in all the commercial schools of Paris, it was immediately begun in thirty schools more.

The same branch is now taught in fifty schools of mutual instruction, in a number of schools of simultaneous instruction, and in ten evening classes of adults.—[*Journal General de l'Instruction*.]

#### THE DAILY USE OF THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.

The schools of this State were founded and supported chiefly for the purpose of perpetuating civil and religious knowledge and liberty, as the early laws of the colony explicitly declare. Those laws, some of which were published in the first number of this Journal, as clearly declare, that the chief means to be used to attain those objects, was the reading of the Holy Scriptures.

In many schools, in later years, the Bible has not been used; though there is reason to believe that the ancient custom of our venerable ancestors has recently been gradually reviving. Circumstances have favored its restoration; and increasing light on the principles of sound education cannot fail to establish it every where.

Certificates are in our hands, from experienced instructors out of this State, which bear strong testimony to the happy influences exerted in their schools, by the daily use of the Scriptures. We may perhaps publish some at a future time; and would request others who have paid attention to the subject, to favor us with communications for our information.

Different teachers we have seen who used the Bible in different ways: some as a class book, some as a text book; and it is interesting to see in how many forms it may be brought into use. Some teachers, with a map of Palestine before them, will give most interesting lessons on almost any book in the Bible, by mingling geography, history, ancient manners and customs, with moral and religious considerations. Others make the Bible the law book of the school; and by showing that they consider themselves and their pupils equally bound to conform their lives and thoughts to its sacred dictates, exercise a species of discipline of the happiest kind. Others still, by the aid of printed questions, or some systematic plan of study, employ the Bible in training the intellect, storing the memory, and furnishing the fancy with the richest treasures of literature. Others think that the various styles found in the sacred volume, offer the very best exercises for practice in reading with propriety and effect; while a critical attention to the character, situation and feelings of the speakers which such exercises require, has favorable moral influences. Finally, other teachers believe that the daily reading of the Bible in schools, is of essential benefit to the pupils in various ways; and that the frequent repetition of the word of God in the hearing even of those too young to read, is an inestimable blessing—a part of the birthright of every child in a Christian land, which cannot be rightfully withheld.

To these views our readers may add their own as they often and seriously consider the subject. It is one which will probably be ever esteemed a vital one in Connecticut; and if Monsieur Cousin so warmly urged upon the government of France, to make religious instruction the corner stone of their national system of education, and urged with success the example of Prussia, we may with greater confidence invite the people of our state to supply their schools with the Scriptures, and point to the laws passed by their fathers for this very end, nearly two centuries ago, and (so far as we have the ability to comprehend so vast a subject,) to the noble effects produced even by their imperfect observance.

#### THE AID OF NEWSPAPERS

Will be highly important to the success of the Connecticut Common School Journal, in the operations to which it is devoted. In our first number it was remarked, that such a paper as this would be "needed, in conection with the public prints, as an organ of communication between the Board and their Secretary and the public."

It will be easy to show in what manner the newspapers in

But there are obstacles in his way from which we in America are free; and while we admire the better features of European education, we may derive new encouragement in our labors at home, as well by appreciating our own superior advantages, as by contemplating the zeal, and perhaps by adopting some of the methods displayed in other countries. With all the advantages above enumerated, then, there are great opposing influences in the way of common education in France. Some of these are more extensive and powerful than would be easily believed.

First, there is a state of hereditary ignorance pervading a great part of the nation, from which it is extremely difficult to arouse them; and there is a great scarcity of materials among the people of which to form teachers, as well as school officers, even while many of the latter are paid for their services. The late minister of instruction, Mr. Guizot, believed that he accomplished as much as was possible with the present generation, although he found room to deplore the small progress he was able to make in the improvements he attempted. In the next place, the religious opinions of the government, and the majority of the nation, are not reconcilable with a thorough plan of improvement. Their principles and prejudices are at war with the true foundation of such a system. The awful experience of France during the Revolution, has convinced the government that infidelity is its deadly foe; and in compliance with the recommendation of Guizot and others, the king laid the foundation of the system of common education on religious instruction. Books of Bible extracts have therefore been introduced into the schools: but this is opposed to the principles taught by Rome. Infant schools, called in France "Salles d'Asyle," (Halls of Asylum,) are exceedingly popular in Paris and other parts of the kingdom: but, only about six months since, the Pope denounced them, as institutions dangerous to the Roman Catholic religion. The "Journal General de l'Education," remarked on this, that His Holiness must have been misinformed, choosing thus to deny his infallibility rather to disown Infant schools. Yet the same journal, in a late number, has been in some way compelled to admit a review of a learned history of the Papacy, by a German Protestant, and to defend the very doctrines which so often oppose the improvement of the schools.

*Now, if we turn from this view of things in France, to consider for a moment our happy freedom in this state, from such formidable difficulties as there exist, how encouraging is the sight! Here is a population trained in common schools, with all their feelings and opinions warmly in favor of education—universal education—education founded on the Bible. We are a people who regard the love of intelligence, virtue and freedom as the chief honor of our ancestors, and would be ashamed to think ourselves incompetent to hand them down to our children.*

But we hasten to notice, though very briefly, the last of the three French publications alluded to above. The Friend of Infancy, an Infant School Journal, (L'Ami de l'Enfance, Journal des Salles d'Asyle.) It is a pamphlet of about 50 pages, published once in two months, by the Infant School Committee, under the sanction of the Minister of Public Instruction. The contents of it are very interesting, as they comprise official acts, reports, methods of instruction, and accounts from Infant Schools in different parts of the continent of Europe, where they have recently been much extended: chiefly in France, Switzerland, Italy and Prussia.

In December last, a long report on the Infant Schools of Paris, was presented to the Central Committee of Public Instruction, by Madame Millet, Special Inspectress of those institutions in the Department of the Seine, from which we learn, that the system was introduced from England in 1827, when she was sent to London by a Committee of Parisian Ladies, to acquaint herself with the schools of that metropolis. Schools of the same class, but on a plan somewhat modified, soon multiplied in Paris. They now amount to twenty-three, and have lately been placed under the supervision and direction of the Minister of Public Instruction. The report of the Inspectress is circumstantial in respect to all these schools, and highly interesting.

Our readers may expect to find in our future numbers occasional extracts from these and some other foreign journals, on subjects important alike on both sides of the Atlantic.

#### SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND VISITERS.

There are few ways in which a person of almost any profession or situation in life whatever, can do more good with so small an expense of time and labor, as by performing the duty of visiting the district schools around him. Every call at the school house, made by a person who feels an interest in the children and their teacher, is sure to excite an interest among them all.

Schools are generally so much neglected by parents, and even by the professed advocates of education, that both teachers and children are tempted to regard them as of very little value. Every department of business receives attention; conversation daily turns on various matters, many of which are of trifling import; but the school and its interests are almost universally treated with neglect. Children indeed may be assured, over and over again, that it is of great importance to them to attend school, and to be punctual, studious and obedient; but they may sometimes suspect that their elders regard it rather as a convenient prison in which they may be kept out of their way. The teacher, too, unless strongly fortified with a clear and manly conception of the real dignity and importance of his daily task, (as many teachers happily are,) will be liable to the danger of considering it, as the public too often do, merely as a thankless, and ill rewarded branch of business, tolerable only to those who have no easier way of gaining a livelihood.

When a visitor enters the school house, actuated by a regard for the place and its inmates, his presence diffuses a higher and more agreeable spirit. He shows that he values the character of the instructor, and approves of the daily labors of the pupils. He is received with smiles, he leaves satisfaction and encouragement behind him.

#### QUESTIONS

*For the examination of a teacher by a School Committee. Such questions have been used with success, and are worthy of general consideration.*

(After enquiries about his residence, education, experience in instruction, intentions for the future, whether to continue in the profession or not, and a careful examination of his certificate of moral character, some record of his replies may be made. The teacher may then be requested to write an application to the Committee for employment in their school. This will afford a good test of his hand-writing, posture, orthography, syntax, command of language, and acquaintance with received forms. He then may be asked how he would frame a quarter bill, or a weekly report to a parent, of the behavior of his child. A few of his words may be given him to parse and define.)

Education is properly divided into three kinds:—intellectual, moral, and physical. A teacher should practice them all every day and hour. What belongs to each of these kinds? (Would you call arithmetic a part of moral education? If a teacher furnishes his pupils with comfortable seats, good air, and timely exercise, what kind of education does he attend to?)

Why is it important for a teacher to know something of the human frame, and the way of preserving health? What do you know of the bones or muscles, or any other part of the body, which would lead you to be careful about the seats or desks—about opening or shutting windows, changing the postures of children, &c.?

Is it important whether children are made to learn by one motive or any other? For what reason? Is fear the best motive? Why? Is emulation, or a spirit of rivalry, the best motive? Why? Is the approbation of the teacher, or friends, the best? Why? Is the hope of getting money, or honor, the best? Is the wish to please God, and to learn of Him, and to be like Him, the best? Why? Do you think a school may be successfully governed and taught, by one who depends chiefly on this motive, duty to God? Mention, if you can, some of the ways in which children may be taught to feel that God requires them to obey their teachers, to treat their companions kindly, and to be studious and conscientious.

Do you think the mind can be well taught any branch, merely by learning to repeat words from memory? How do you begin to teach reading? Why do you prefer that method? What do you think of the practice of teaching the letters first, and

the whole spelling book next, before the child is allowed to read or write at all? Do you think writing on slates, or otherwise, may assist in learning letters, spelling or reading? Why? May definitions be advantageously taught before a child can read? When and how?

At what age may a child be allowed to begin to learn writing? In what manner? Would you use slates? The blackboard? Why? How do you teach a child to sit while writing? How to hold a pencil or pen? How long should a writing lesson continue? How often should the lessons be repeated? Should drawing lines or pictures be practised, to aid in teaching to write, or for any other purpose? Write a specimen of such large hands as you would wish your pupils to write. Then small hands. Would you connect writing with spelling? Defining? Arithmetic? Reading? Geography? How?

At about what age would you have the study of arithmetic begun? In what manner? Would you depend entirely on books in teaching any part of arithmetic? Why? By what means may arithmetic be made familiar and useful in the daily concerns of life? How would you teach the ready use of weights, measures and money?

When and how would you begin to teach grammar? How would you make it practically useful?

#### IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

Much attention has been attracted to the progress made in common schools in the state of New York. Both in America and in Europe, the annual reports made by the superintendent to the legislature, have excited much interest; and that for good reasons. By the adoption of a particular system, founded on an active, practical principle, that state succeeded, in a few years, in inducing her inhabitants to organize districts, erect school houses, provide teachers, assemble almost all the children, and make regular returns on the various important points required by law, so that official reports were readily made, every session of the legislature, of the state of the schools, and with a facility that excited general surprise, as well as gratification.

It probably appears to many, a matter of wonder how all this can have been done, and is still doing, in a state until lately so differently situated from our own and Massachusetts. While New Jersey and Pennsylvania, though lying adjacent, have remained in their hereditary indifference to common schools, how has it come to pass that they are found in such a state of prosperity in New York?

The legislature had the happiness, (it may have been the foresight also,) to adopt a principle in making school laws, which has great vigor in it, and which, it is to be presumed, under appropriate application, may hereafter be made to produce still greater effects in other states. They offered a small sum out of the interest of their school fund, to each district which should comply with certain terms; and those terms were such as were judiciously suited to the condition of the state. School officers were to be appointed in each district, a school room provided, a teacher employed who had been furnished with a certificate by the inspectors within twelve months, a census of the children taken, &c., all was this to be reported through the regular channels, to the superintendent before a specified day, on penalty of losing all claim to the school money of the state.

A little reflection will convince the reader, that this pecuniary motive might operate with effect, at least, in some cases. For if the people of a district desired to obtain their share of the money, and failed through the negligence of an inspector, a commissioner or the teacher, censure would fall where it was due; and the next year the ground of complaint would naturally be avoided. Or if a portion of the inhabitants were willing to raise the money required of the district, and another opposed to it, when the time arrived for the annual distribution of the income of the fund, the latter party would be very likely to be charged with the public loss. Now experience has proved in New York, that this principle is extensively useful when so applied; and, although it may at first strike us as mercenary, and in some sense unworthy to be employed to favor the noble object of common education, it loses its ob-

jectionable aspect when carefully examined. It has a direct tendency to enlist men of influence in the details of school operations, and in a manner compels even those who chiefly seek popularity, to appear as the advocates of education.

The pecuniary interest appealed to, is that of the public: to desire which, and to labor for it, is generous and laudable in an individual, provided it interferes with no right. And this interest is placed by the law in a secondary rank, as subservient to the schools. Whoever has anything to do under the law, must feel that education is its great end, and the importance of education must be raised in his esteem.

Thus the principle on which the law of the state of New York was founded, not only seems an active one, but experience has proved it to be so. It has not accomplished all which some have hoped, nor which many may now suppose: but it has brought about a great and salutary change in a very few years, and in the only proper and useful manner, viz., by the voluntary agency of the people. The small amount annually distributed among the districts, has induced them to spend many times more, besides enlisting thousands of respectable men in more or less systematic labor every year in behalf of the schools. The results have been overrated by some writers both at home and abroad, and that is unfortunate. Intelligent friends of education in the state are sensible of the imperfections of the system, and the various abuses which have prevailed in different places; yet its excellence is great, and its advantages are seen in the wonderful, and perhaps unprecedented change which it has produced.

But, as was hinted above, the New York law should be nowhere exactly copied, unless in a state where education is in the condition in which it was there a few years ago. The same principle may probably be used elsewhere with success; but it must be applied under modifications wisely adapted to the state of things to be improved. The law already requires alteration in that state. Indeed, the superintendent of Common Schools of New York, several years since, began to recommend that new and higher conditions should be imposed on the districts. This is evidently desirable; for now that the first terms required have been generally complied with, no farther progress is made in improving education. Things remain stagnant, because no inducement is offered to proceed. The motive has lost its moving power, because it has reached the end of its range. If every district in New York were now required to prove that the school house, if new, has been built in a good spot, and according to a given plan,—or if old, has been prepared for ventilation, furnished with approved desks and benches, supplied with books, slates, black boards, maps, a library, globes, and other necessary apparatus,—if these or other improvements were required, and more occasionally added to the list, there is reason to presume that the progress of the state would be progressive. The reason we have to question whether the legislature of that state were really acquainted with the nature of the principle alluded to, when they introduced it into their system, arises from the fact that they show little disposition to make a new application of it, and so little intelligence by delaying to adapt it to present circumstances and wants.

#### VIEWS OF FELLENBERG CONCERNING THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.

The following is an extract from "Travels on the Continent of Europe," by President Fisk:

"Mr. Fellenberg expressed his very great surprise at the neglect of religious instruction in our schools in America; that the Bible was excluded as a regular text book; in short, that in the United States, among a religious, a protestant, an enlightened, a free people, man should be educated so much in view of his physical wants, and his temporal existence, while the moral feelings of the heart, and our religious relations to God and eternity, should be left so much out of our schools.

But, he said, the great principles of our religion would come into collision with no man's views who believed in Christianity; and that, at any rate, party views were nothing in comparison with the importance of religious training; and therefore every good man ought to be willing to make some sacrifices of party views for the great benefits of an early religious education. How true are these sentiments! How worthy of

the philanthropist of Hofwyl! When will the citizens of the United States feel their force?"

It will gratify many of our readers, we have no doubt, to hear so decided an expression in favor of that great fundamental feature in the school system of our ancestors, viz., the use of the Scriptures in schools, from the excellent Mr. Fellenberg, the founder of the noble institution of Hofwyl, in Switzerland. It is gratifying, also, to hear it approved by our much respected countryman, President Fisk. We are happy to say, however, that the Bible is becoming used more and more every year in our schools, and that although too extensively neglected, it is probably less so than Mr. Fellenberg supposed.

#### SCHOOL HOUSES.

Most of the school houses in this state may be considerably improved without much expense, and indeed with none at all. There are two reasons why many improvements are not made which would prove both cheap and important. The first is, little care has been taken to point out their defects to those who would have been likely to remove them; and the second is, that bad habits are apt to blind the eyes, so that we overlook evils to which we are accustomed.

Desks and benches should be so formed, as to make the children who use them as comfortable as possible. By sawing off a few legs, till the children can sit and place their feet on the floor, and lay their arms on the desks while writing, without raising their elbows, much comfort and good writing may be secured.

The teacher should never forget, that he himself requires such arrangements as these for his own comfort, and would think it a hardship if denied them for a single day. He should remember also, that he never sits upright an hour or two, without wishing to lean his back against something. Yet he is far more able to sit without leaning, than children are. The muscles which hold their bodies erect, are much weaker, and sooner wearied.

He probably has a back to his seat, and often uses it; let him make similar provision for his pupils. He will find them much more studious, and more easily governed, by every such attention to their natural weakness and wants. Some benches may be moved to the back of a desk, and those who sit on it, permitted to lean. When that cannot be done, the children may be made to change their places for a time, during recitation, for instance.

Standing affords no relief to the back, though some may suppose it does. The whole trunk, head and arms must still be held in an upright position by the power of the muscles below the short ribs. Observe a child who needs rest for those muscles while standing, and nature will declare it. He throws the weight of his frame on one foot; that affords relief to the muscles on the other side; then he changes, to rest the other muscles in their turn. He needs a temporary resting place for his back; and even a few minutes will commonly suffice.

It would be well if the teacher would sometimes sit as long without leaning, as his children do, and lean only while they lean. Many teachers have not thought particularly on this subject, and therefore give it so little attention.

One improvement which most school houses require, is such a change in the window casing, that the upper sashes, (or at least some on both sides of the room,) may be lowered at pleasure. In many instances this may be provided for with great facility. It is, however, not sufficient without daily attention on the part of the teacher, as many school houses bear witness. Some of the best school rooms in Boston, (and in other places too,) are rarely well ventilated, although the windows are fitted for it, because the lowering of the upper sashes is neglected.

Windows should be so made and used, on more accounts than one. When the lower sash is raised, the wind blows in horizontally upon the papers, and often gives the children colds. But the most important advantage afforded by lowering the upper sashes, is this: that it lets out the impure air, while it lets in the pure. Many persons do not clearly understand how this change is effected; even some who have heard it explained do not appear fully to apprehend it. Let us say what has often been said before on this point, with the hope that teachers and school visitors will pay strict attention to the ventilation of our school rooms hereafter.

Warm air rises. Breathing air warms it, and so does the heat from our bodies. The air around us, therefore, and still more that coming out from our lungs, is continually rising. When we are in a tight room, it rises to the ceiling, and there remains, at least until it becomes cool, and warmer air goes up to take its place.

Let it be borne in mind here, that air once breathed is not well fitted to be breathed again, and never will be, until it has got among the leaves of living plants, and remained there some time. This is owing to certain changes which we have not now time enough to explain, but which the science of chemistry makes known in a most interesting manner.

Now the air which comes from the lungs of a school full of children, rises towards the ceiling, and in a short time a large quantity of warm, breathed air will be collected in the upper part of the room, while that in the lower part may be pure. But in an hour or two, or half an hour, according to the size of the room and number of scholars, the impure air will fill the whole room, and the children must begin to breathe it over again. Even if the lower sashes of the window are kept open, the evil is only partly remedied. It is impossible to change all the air by that means: for that which is above the level of the openings is left without any means of escape, or can be driven out only very gradually, by a slow intermixture with the fresh air, which produces some commotion by its entrance.

The air in the upper part of a room will not come down and go out of a window as soon as it is opened, though some teachers, as well as other people, seem to think so. But make an opening any where in the upper part of the room, and the upper air will pass out as soon as air from without can enter to supply its place.

Any person who may wish to understand these operations, may try experiments when the room has been filled with dust or smoke. Let him try one day to get rid of the annoyance by opening the windows only from below, and the next day by lowering the upper sashes on both sides of the room, or the upper on one side, and the lower on the other. He will then be able to perceive the advantage of the practice here recommended in daily ventilation.

The late report on school houses, made by Horace Mann, Esq., superintendent of common schools in Massachusetts, forcibly urges this practice, and many others connected with the improvement of school rooms and buildings.

#### INFANT SCHOOLS.

Among the improvements made, within a few years, in different departments of education, is to be ranked the whole system of Infant schools. In this country, it is true, infant schools have been opened and conducted for a time in some towns, where they have afterwards been closed and abandoned; and not a few of their early friends are now, in some degree, indifferent, and indeed opposed to them.

In some of our principal cities, however, infant schools still exist, and have their warm friends, whose esteem for the system appears to increase, rather than to decline, from year to year. Those friends, it is believed, generally regard many of the experiments heretofore made in different parts of the Union, as unfair; and certainly almost all the teachers opened their schools with very little previous experience; while most of the managers and directors were no better prepared for their duties.

It is a fact which seems to claim attention, that where infant schools have been most known, they have received the most approbation; and that both teachers and managers, who have been most active in their direction, and best acquainted with the details of their results, have become their most decided advocates. It is believed that these remarks would be found true, if careful inquiries were made in New-York and Philadelphia, especially, and in Paris, and several other principal cities of Europe. Another fact is important to be considered, viz. that where infant schools have existed, they have produced important improvements in other schools. Even in some places where they have been given up, and where prejudices exist against them, surrounding schools are better, in some respects, than they were before. The reason of this may be easily pointed out.

Infant schools, though they are very different from such other in a variety of respects, generally agree in a few material particulars. Low seats with backs are provided, expressly for

the comfort and convenience of small children; healthful and pleasing exercises of the limbs and body are practised; the singing of hymns and moral songs is a frequent occupation; the study of natural history is pursued to some extent, either by means of sensible objects, such as stones, wood, leaves, fruits, shells, &c., or with pictures of them, or at least with books which give intelligible accounts of animals, plants, minerals, &c. with questions adapted to recitations. Writing, and often drawing, on sand or slates, is generally practised; the manner of teaching is more varied, enlivening and parental than in some other schools; and the discipline is commonly more mild; while religious and moral instructions are more frequent and familiar.

Probably no teacher ever entered an Infant school for the first time, without receiving hints of importance on some point of instruction or discipline. Certain it is that many, and those of much experience too, have found something to approve and to imitate. Hence it has come to pass, that the influence of such schools has sometimes remained with others after they have ceased to exist.

#### MUSIC TAUGHT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF PARIS, AND TO WORKMEN.

[Translated for the Connecticut Common School Journal.]

On the 6th of May, the general meeting called the Orpheon was held in the Hotel de Ville. It consisted of the young pupils of the free schools, who had been formed into singing classes by M. B. Wilhem, general inspecting director of vocal music of the primary schools of the city of Paris.

Those pupils from the male adult schools who had been taught in music classes, were joined with the children, for the tenor and bass, so that voices of very different ages and characters rendered the orchestra the more complete.

The choir, in number above 400, performed in admirable time and harmony, several select pieces, without any instrumental accompaniment, which were received with general applause: "The Invocation, by Sacchini; "the Romanesca," a piece of the 16th century; "the Spectacle of Nature," by Tschärner; a vocal symphony, by Chelard; "the Little Boarders," &c. The exhibition was concluded by two of the chef d'œuvre of Michel and Philidor, &c. Several of the pieces were repeated by request. The Hall of St. John was filled; and among the spectators were the Prefect of La Seine and his family, several mayors of the arrondissements and their assistants, M. Orfila, member of the Council of Public Instruction, and several other members of the University, the celebrated composer Berton, and some of the members of the Academy.

The success of this meeting promises much for the well organized introduction of vocal instruction; and reflected the highest honor on the respected officer who has the direction of that branch.

The introduction of vocal music into the education of the people, is a more important point than we might at first be inclined to believe. Besides the development which it gives to a precious organ, and the relaxation it affords to the laborer after his work, the display it makes of talents which would otherwise have remained unknown, or might never have existed, and its creating new branches of business for the industrious, music supplies a pure and noble species of pleasure, in place of amusements too often gross, ruinous and even criminal. It tends to soften and purify the manners, and is in fact a great step towards the moral improvement and melioration of the lower classes, which, in our age, ought to be the object of all the friends of the human race. We may add, that by means of it, will gradually be effected the musical education of France, which country, to the present time, has remained so inferior in this respect to Germany and Italy, and which may perhaps soon have as little reason to envy its neighbors on this point as on any other.

Gratuitous and popular instruction in vocal music in Paris, was commenced in September, 1819, by the first use of M. Wilhem's method, in the communal school of the street of St. Jean de Beauvais. This method, which was adopted in March, 1820, after a report by Messrs. De Gerando, de Lasto, Francaur and Jomard, was successively introduced into the two schools of the society of elementary instruction, and the nine schools of the city of Paris.

In the month of May, 1835, on the proposition of the Count de Rambuteau, Prefect of la Seine, President of the Central Committee of Primary Instruction, the municipal council having unanimously voted for instruction in singing in all the commercial schools of Paris, it was immediately begun in thirty schools more.

The same branch is now taught in fifty schools of mutual instruction, in a number of schools of simultaneous instruction, and in ten evening classes of adults.—[*Journal General de l'Instruction*.]

#### THE DAILY USE OF THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.

The schools of this State were founded and supported chiefly for the purpose of perpetuating civil and religious knowledge and liberty, as the early laws of the colony explicitly declare. Those laws, some of which were published in the first number of this Journal, as clearly declare, that the chief means to be used to attain those objects, was the reading of the Holy Scriptures.

In many schools, in later years, the Bible has not been used; though there is reason to believe that the ancient custom of our venerable ancestors has recently been gradually reviving. Circumstances have favored its restoration; and increasing light on the principles of sound education cannot fail to establish it every where.

Certificates are in our hands, from experienced instructors out of this State, which bear strong testimony to the happy influences exerted in their schools, by the daily use of the Scriptures. We may perhaps publish some at a future time; and would request others who have paid attention to the subject, to favor us with communications for our information.

Different teachers we have seen who used the Bible in different ways: some as a class book, some as a text book; and it is interesting to see in how many forms it may be brought into use. Some teachers, with a map of Palestine before them, will give most interesting lessons on almost any book in the Bible, by mingling geography, history, ancient manners and customs, with moral and religious considerations. Others make the Bible the law book of the school; and by showing that they consider themselves and their pupils equally bound to conform their lives and thoughts to its sacred dictates, exercise a species of discipline of the happiest kind. Others still, by the aid of printed questions, or some systematic plan of study, employ the Bible in training the intellect, storing the memory, and furnishing the fancy with the richest treasures of literature. Others think that the various styles found in the sacred volume, offer the very best exercises for practice in reading with propriety and effect; while a critical attention to the character, situation and feelings of the speakers which such exercises require, has favorable moral influences. Finally, other teachers believe that the daily reading of the Bible in schools, is of essential benefit to the pupils in various ways; and that the frequent repetition of the word of God in the hearing even of those too young to read, is an inestimable blessing—a part of the birthright of every child in a Christian land, which cannot be rightfully withheld.

To these views our readers may add their own as they often and seriously consider the subject. It is one which will probably be ever esteemed a vital one in Connecticut; and if Monsieur Cousin so warmly urged upon the government of France, to make religious instruction the corner stone of their national system of education, and urged with success the example of Prussia, we may with greater confidence invite the people of our state to supply their schools with the Scriptures, and point to the laws passed by their fathers for this very end, nearly two centuries ago, and (so far as we have the ability to comprehend so vast a subject,) to the noble effects produced even by their imperfect observance.

#### THE AID OF NEWSPAPERS

Will be highly important to the success of the Connecticut Common School Journal, in the operations to which it is devoted. In our first number it was remarked, that such a paper as this would be "needed, in connection with the public prints, as an organ of communication between the Board and their Secretary and the public."

It will be easy to show in what manner the newspapers in

every part of the state may render aid. They may recommend our objects, plans and operations, so far as they approve them; and enforce them, it is very probable, with greater eloquence and effect than ourselves. They may exert an influence upon their readers which our paper, new and unknown to many of them, cannot possess. They may notice the appearance of the numbers as they come out, and allude to the leading subjects introduced, to keep the public, and especially school officers and teachers in mind of what is doing for the benefit of the schools of the State. They can assist in the collection of useful facts concerning the history or state of education around them, and in devising wise measures for future operation: as well as by debating such questions as may require discussion. Some of them may be well informed concerning education in other states or countries, and can materially add to the common stock of interesting information, which we hope soon to see circulating through all our papers. We hope also that they may find something in our columns worthy of being copied into their own; and we doubt not that we shall find great satisfaction in repeated proofs of their sympathy and spirit of co-operation.

For reasons to which we have alluded in another paragraph in this paper, we count on the aid of the Connecticut press, to any reasonable extent: but we know it would be too much to expect them to publish all that should be presented to parents, officers, teachers and children, in the wide range of topics which is properly embraced in the plan of this paper. It has been our design, by timely arrangements, to have a column or more on certain classes of subjects simultaneously published in as many papers as possible; but it is evident that few if any of them could always be ready to print just such communications as it may sometimes be necessary to make, with little or no warning.

It has been suggested by some friends, that the necessary publications might perhaps be made in the political and religious newspapers, as well as in one devoted to education. But other considerations beside those given above, have convinced us that such a plan would not succeed. If any one paper should be offered as the vehicle of communication, many persons would prefer some other; and if it were introduced into schools, some objection would arise against its party or sectarian reputation. Besides, if there were no other objection, the Common School Journal costs only fifty cents a year while the price of a weekly newspaper is about two dollars. On the other hand, if more than one paper were employed, although there might be a choice among persons of different opinions on some subjects, no-one could read all the communications published, without subscribing for two or more weekly papers; and to supply a teacher with the matter would cost not 50 cents, as now, but several dollars.

#### GOOD EXAMPLE.

Farmington last year elected a visiting committee of nine members—and then passed a vote authorizing the Board to designate two of their number who should in company visit all the schools in town at least twice during each season of schooling, and report to the next annual meeting their precise condition.

This sub-committee consisted of John T. Norton, Esq. and Mr. Calvin Hatch, and were authorized to charge one dollar per day for their services.

We have seen the report drawn up by John T. Norton, Esq. It is full and faithful—and we venture to say, that a series of such reports made to the several school societies in the state, would awaken in parents a livelier interest in the schools, and encourage teachers to greater devotion in their noble, but too much undervalued, employment.

The Committee give an account of their several visits to each school—specifying the date—the condition of the school-house—the name of the teacher—the different classes examined—the books used—the success of the teacher in government as well as in instruction—the number in attendance, &c.

They then present a summary view of all the schools, making such observations as are adapted to encourage those who have done well, and to lead those who have failed in any particular, to pursue a different course hereafter. For instance, they say "the greatest improvement witnessed was in the middle school, kept by Mr. H. T. Wells"—"the best reading

was in the school at Scott's Swamp," "and the best class in town, including boys and girls, was in that school"—"The best writing was in the school at Plainville, kept by Mr. Hart," &c. &c.

After remarking on the importance of education, the Committee add, that every parent who neglects to give his child a good common school education, does that child the greatest possible injury. He fails also in his duty to his country, by giving it a citizen unqualified to discharge his duties,—and above all, he neglects a trust committed to him by God.

That this degree of education is undervalued and neglected within their limits, the Committee conclude,

1. Because two-fifths of the children are all the time out of school.
2. Because those who do attend, are at school only two-thirds of the year.
3. Because parents seldom, if ever, either visit the school, or attend meetings for their regulation and improvement.
4. Because good teachers are not secured by a little additional tax upon the society.
5. Because school houses are neglected, and inconveniences in arrangement and accommodation not corrected.

After specifying the more prominent defects in the present condition of the schools, such as the constant change of teachers, irregular attendance of scholars, variety and frequent change of school books, the mechanical kind of instruction communicated, &c., the Committee conclude their report with the following suggestions:

1. That the schools be kept at least ten months in the year.
2. That great care be taken to procure first-rate teachers; and if they are found competent, to continue them from year to year.
3. That the same books be used in all the schools in town, and that no new book be introduced, except in the beginning of the year, and by vote of the school visitors.
4. That some measure be adopted to secure the regular attendance of all the children in town on some school, public or private.
5. That a District Committee be appointed who shall visit the school at least once a fortnight, during each season of schooling.
6. That an anniversary meeting of all the schools be held in the month of February, in the meeting-house. This was formerly done in Farmington, and is now practiced in every town in Prussia.

We have presented this imperfect abstract of Mr. Norton's and Mr. Hatch's Report, because we think it reflects great credit upon them for their fidelity and public spirit. And as our law now requires that school visitors shall "submit an annual Report to their respective school societies, of their own doings and of the condition of the several schools within their limits, with such observations as their experience and reflections may suggest," it may serve as a fair specimen of a faithful discharge of the obligation now imposed upon that most responsible body, the Board of School Visitors?

Is there not in every school society in the State one school visitor who will see that this requisition of the law is faithfully complied with? A series of full and faithful reports on the condition of the schools, read before the Societies, or published in the papers, would infuse new vitality into our school system.

To the friends of popular education who have given us their sympathy and co-operation thus far in our work, we return our grateful acknowledgements. So far as we have heard from them, they have done better by the Journal than we ventured to anticipate. We shall be glad to receive the names of all who desire to promote its circulation, as early as practicable. In the mean time we shall address the present number to the same names we did the first.

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